

## **JESUS' PRAYER FOR UNITY JOHN 17**

**GARNERED FROM LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

In his discussion of Christology, Chafer addresses Jesus' prayer for unity as found in John 17. He comments on the fact of repetition of the prayer so as to frame it four times as evidence of the importance of such unity in the mind of Christ. Jesus asks, "that they may be one as we are"; "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee"; that they may be one, even as we are one"; and "that they may be made perfect in one". This unity would result in a divine working resulting in a unity as vital as that between Jesus and the father.

As a result of that prayer there exists a special unity in direct answer to the prayer. A unity of great magnitude, real and vital, with an element that places it in the highest of heavenly endeavors. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:1-3, takes the reality of that unity to urge believers to "walk worth of the vocation to which you are called . . . forbearing one another in love, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". In the context he encourages the believer to be meek and lowly and to be longsuffering, with forbearance, and love toward one another and thereby seek to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

Chafer thus observes the following:

"This unity, it will be observed, is that already made by the Spirit and is not unity which is formed when believers are faithful to each other. Keeping the unity engendered by the Spirit when He united all as members in Christ's body is far removed from an attempt on the part of believers to make a unity which is no more than the outward exercise of good fellowship with one another."

He goes on to state that the breaking of such unity is an immeasurable sin against the work of God and the heart of Christ and yet this unity is consistently broken outwardly when sectarian divisions exist and inwardly when Christians feed such divisions

Jesus declared that this unity for which he had prayed would demonstrate to the world concerning him and cause them to believe. Most importantly, Chafer points out that this means that believers do not need to work to make unity. Rather, believers are appointed to keep the unity provided by God, I.e. to love all other believers perfectly. Differences and prejudice must be set aside in exercising such love. The charge to keep the unity of the Spirit, much as that to love one another, is personal in its execution and fulfilled only when the believer total loves one another.

Chafer is telling us that the unity of a body of believers is automatic from God. We do not gain such unity by extending our actions toward one another. Conversely, the failure to reach out to one another in love is to break the unity that God implants and intends to be shared.

Ron and Bud